

Freshman journeys to her dream team

By Zack Feldman
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

As an eighth grader, Emily Giannotti could not have dreamt she would be where she is now.

New to track, Giannotti was curious enough to turn on the Pennsylvania track championships, watching Boiling Springs sophomore Kara Millhouse win the state championship in the two-mile race.

The inspiration Giannotti got from watching the final leg of the race helped carry her to where she is today — running for Penn State's cross country team, where her captain and teammate is none other than Millhouse.

"I had just gotten into running, and the meet was on the local or state channel," the Coudersport native said.

"I watched as Kara was running up front with this other girl. And I watched Kara outkick her on the last lap, and I thought, 'That was



Tom Ruane/Colegian

Emily Giannotti runs a lap during practice at the Multi-Sport Facility.

awesome, I want to do that."

Almost five years later, the Penn State freshman runner is now an integral part of Penn State's cross country team.

Giannotti placed fourth overall in her first career collegiate meet, the team's annual dual meet against Lock Haven. Following that first meet, which Giannotti said was "almost like a practice" because of the lack of competition, she said she got her first jitters before the Harry Groves Spiked Shoe Invitational, where she finished sixth.

"It was my first big race and there was a lot of teams and it was on our home course," Giannotti said.

"It's the first time I've ever raced [6,000-meters]. I was really scared because people were pushing, but I think the biggest difference from high school was the last kilometer. It seemed to go on forever.

"It was also kind of surreal, just thinking, 'I'm running for Penn State,' so I don't really remember the race. Just running as hard as I could, then dying."

Giannotti has placed in the top-six of all but one of her races, most recently placing sixth for Penn State at the Big Ten championships, helping the team to a fourth-place finish.

Though Giannotti entered her first collegiate cross country season this fall, she first entered NCAA Division I without much background on how to compete in the sport.

Giannotti first took up running in eighth grade, running under coach Carl Klingaman, head coach of both the men's and women's teams at Coudersport Area Junior-Senior High School.

Klingaman immediately took Giannotti under his wing when he noticed how advanced a runner she was already.

"I could really tell in eighth grade she would be something special if she wanted to be," Klingaman said. "It was a couple different things. Mainly it was because she was so much better than anybody else. Her work ethic was unbelievable. I had no problems with her doing whatever I asked her to do. She might complain every once in a while, but she'd always do it."

But while running seemed to

come naturally to her, Giannotti's first love was on the court.

At the school where she later became the valedictorian of her senior class, Giannotti had intended to play basketball, only to decide at a summer basketball camp how much more she enjoyed running.

"In ninth grade, I started varsity and I ended up winning meets in cross country and the two-mile in track," Giannotti said. "I thought, 'I like this, and I'm pretty good,' so I quit basketball. I was running all year-round, and I started to love it."

Klingaman started Coudersport's cross country team 10 years ago. He said there were limitations to Giannotti's ability to both train and compete in meets because with roughly 60 students a year in each graduating class, the cross country program averaged between just seven to nine girls a year.

Not wanting to see talent wasted, Klingaman, who once was Giannotti's chemistry teacher, found other opportunities for Giannotti, one of very few runners who would show up in shape for the beginning of cross country season. After team practice ended, Giannotti would continue her own workouts.

"We don't have indoor track, so I would find meets and take her to them because she was really motivated to do well," Klingaman said. "I tried to get her into invitational meets where she would have some competition, and it was surprising to me that she would win them. And she wouldn't just win them, she'd win by 20 seconds or better, and she didn't ever seem to have that much competition."

Track and field for the star runner consisted of running the two-mile and one-mile races, as well as the 4x800-meter and 4x400-meter relays each meet, winning the individual races easily.

With the lack of competition, Klingaman was unsure how Giannotti would respond once her big opportunity would come.

"It worried me when she finally got to states [in cross country senior year], because she was finally with a few people who could run with her," Klingaman said. "She did well, though and she got sixth at states. That was one of the best things to see her there. I would

have hated to see her not make it, because she worked so hard and she really wanted that."

Her freshman year of track and field was even more promising, when she could specialize in an event. She placed fifth in the two-mile at the state outdoor track finals, motivating her to keep progressing.

"I kind of made it a goal — I wanted to win a state title before I graduate," Giannotti said. "Junior year, I thought, 'I want to keep doing this. I don't want to stop in two more years.' My senior year I won that state title, and I was so excited."

During Giannotti's junior year, she realized she could take running seriously, even beyond high school. College programs began to take notice of her performance, including Penn State assistant coach John Gondak and Cornell's head coach. After taking trips to visit both, Giannotti said the choice was tough, making her choice based on where she thought she would be happiest in case running did not work out.

When Giannotti arrived at Penn State for training, teammates such as junior captain Caitlin Lane quickly took notice.

"I remember Emily on her visit and hearing about her, and when she came in after the first few practices, I knew she would fit right in to the top seven," Lane said. "I didn't know how into running she was until these past few meets, but she's definitely brought a nice attitude to the team."

Giannotti credits some of her success to Dr. David Yukelson, Penn State's sports psychologist, who she began seeing after finding it difficult to recover mentally from a three-month bout with anemia during her junior year of high school.

"I remember I thought, 'Why should I even run anymore?' When the going got rough in races, I would give up," Giannotti said.

"We talked a lot about my goals and bringing the fun back into running and not worrying about what I can't control. I still work with him to this day, and he does such a good job calming me down and keeping me focused. He's been a big part of my success between high school and now."

Giannotti, a kinesiology major.

said a career path she hopes to follow someday would be in sports psychology, like her mentor Yukelson.

Even with Giannotti's adjustment to a large school, head coach Beth Alford-Sullivan said she was expected to contribute right away, though even Alford-Sullivan was impressed with her determination to better herself.

"Emily's come in and she's a competitor — she's very excited to make a difference at Penn State, and those are the types of kids we always want," Alford-Sullivan said. "She's stepped right into the game and done a super job."

Successful in her first few meets, she quickly earned the chance to travel with the team before earning a spot on the Big Ten championship roster.

"She put herself into position to make the Big Ten squad, and I think that's an underlying goal of every freshman to make the travel squad and to train through the summer with that goal," Alford-Sullivan said.

"She's achieved very well. I'm very proud of her."

Already looking forward to indoor track, Giannotti is excited at seeing how she compares in more specialized events, such as the 3,000- and 5,000-meter races.

And though still a freshman, Giannotti's inexperience has not been a limiting factor when it comes to looking toward the future.

"My dream that's way out there would be to go to the Olympics. Who doesn't dream of that?" Giannotti said. "But I need to take baby steps. I'm only a freshman in college."

Though Giannotti and her coaches are happy with how she has performed so far, she will always be in pursuit of a better result.

"I'm never content. I always think, 'I could have gone faster,'" Giannotti said.

"Going into a meet, I always want to [set a personal record.] I'm definitely looking forward to track because then I'll have a better understanding of where I am against the top people in the nation. But now I just need to keep working at it, keep improving and stay healthy."

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Men's basketball hoping to build off of Frazier's energy

By Emily Kaplan
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Coach Ed DeChellis said sophomore Tim Frazier was going 100 mph the entire game.

In the Penn State men's basketball team's exhibition against East Stroudsburg on Sunday,

Frazier was all over the court. And the coach wants the point guard to know it's OK to gear down.

Frazier — who was the only different starter from the 2009-10 season in Sunday's lineup — picked up 10 points, two steals and a game-high six assists in Penn State's 66-52 victory over the Division II Warriors.

It was an energy the Lions said they will look to build off this year, but also something they hope can be polished as the team works out some early-season kinks.

"Right now he's playing in one gear: Superspeed," DeChellis said. "He needs to pick his moments, then his speed is much more useful to him."

The coach said he wanted Frazier — who recorded a team-high 28 minutes — to play when the game was on the line. DeChellis said he already knew what senior Talor Battle, Penn State's leading scorer in each of the last three sea-

sons, could do, and wanted to test some of the younger guys out.

Frazier was the only starter on the court for the last six minutes or so of play. He was a catalyst for the offense that surged from a one-point halftime deficit to the eventual 14-point exhibition win.

Battle picked up 12 of his 16 points in the sluggish first half — in which Penn State scored only 25 points — but the second half was all about equal distribution.

"Talor just came out hot," Frazier said. "He's a senior, sometimes that's a lot of what the seniors do. They come out hot, they know the rules. Us young guys...we're still trying to learn the rules, get in the flow of things."

In the second half, Frazier was right in the middle of it all. With

7:43 left in the game, Frazier helped cap off a 6-0 Lion run by setting up senior Jeff Brooks for a dunk that had the crowd at the Bryce Jordan Center on its feet.

Then, with three minutes to go, Frazier helped seal the win. Trapped in a double team deep past the East Stroudsburg bench, Frazier dribbled twice then simply ran through the two defenders, setting up a fast-break and assisting senior Steve Kirkpatrick on a layup that gave Penn State a 12-point lead, the second-largest margin of the night.

DeChellis noted those strong plays, but also pointed out Frazier's four fouls, including a "dumb" one right in front of the Lions' bench in the second half.

"That's the kind of stuff that

we've got to clean up," DeChellis said. "But he's very active. He can make free throws, he can make other guys better, he's just trying to settle in."

Battle said Frazier has done a good job of trying to be a leader for the Lions.

Battle said the sophomore has been focusing on distributing the ball better and trying to limit turnovers.

DeChellis thinks turnover numbers will improve, as will Frazier's play — as long as the guard slows down just a little bit.

"He can affect a game," DeChellis said. "And that's what we're trying to let him do, affect a game."

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Schaefer's first goal of season lifts team to Big Ten championship

By Andrew Robinson
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Ali Schaefer sat upon her teammates' shoulders hoisting, over her head, the pointed slate-gray and glass trophy with a gold oval representing the Big Ten title she had just delivered.

Her teammates knew nobody else could have scored the goal that sent the Penn State women's soccer team to its 13th straight title.

"Of course it was Ali Schaefer," Nittany Lions coach Erica Walsh said.

"She's been the one all season long that when you look and say, 'We need that little extra bit,' she's been the one that's come through with it. It couldn't have happened

to a better person or a better player."

The Las Vegas, Nev. native's 109th minute goal against Michigan was her first of the year, but it was arguably the biggest goal of the season. It was also just the second goal of Schaefer's Penn State career, her other goal coming in the season-ending 6-2 loss to Virginia last year.

Leaving Jeffrey Field Sunday, the junior midfielder joked her second goal felt a lot better because it came in a win.

"Absolutely phenomenal," Schaefer said of the goal that earned her a spot on

TopDrawerSoccer.com's Team of the Week. "It could not have come at a better time."

On senior day, Schaefer made sure she sent Dani Toney and Megan Monroig off as winners.

Monroig said she couldn't have asked for anything more.

"It's wonderful for Schaefer, she absolutely deserves it," Monroig said. "She's one of the hardest working people on our team."

On Sunday, Schaefer fired seven shots, a career high, getting four on target, including the final shot of the game. Primarily a holding midfielder, Schaefer's offensive game has evolved this year.

A year ago, Schaefer was the main reserve for the central midfield, but took only 12 shots over 19 games. This year, the player who scored 96 times at Green Valley High School, has been more

inclined to fire off a shot.

A fearless slide into the box that ended with a collision with Michigan's goalkeeper, Schaefer has evolved into a deep shooter this year. Nearly every day, the junior stays after practice to put shot after shot on net from outside the box, routinely scoring impressive goals.

"She's been working for it all season long," Toney said. "She wanted that goal and it's awesome it came from her. It could have come from anybody, everybody was really working hard, doing everything they could, throwing their bodies into everything. She's one of the players that does that the best."

Needing a goal, Walsh made the move to pull a defender for an extra attacker, making Schaefer's role as a defender more impor-

tant. The midfielder filled that role perfectly, hustling back on every Michigan attack and making fearless tackles against 5-foot-11 Nkem Ezurike, who had a six-inch height advantage on Schaefer.

After scoring, Schaefer ran through the growing huddle of her teammates and out to midfield, saying she felt like running home to Las Vegas and giving her mom a hug. Teammates have noted the junior's spontaneous attitude and it wasn't the first time they've seen an emotion-fed celebration.

This one just meant a little bit more. "Even in practice she celebrates like she just won the World Cup or something," junior captain Emma Thomson said. "She stuck in there and took the opportunity when it came. She deserved it."

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Icers junior Seravalli returns from reconstructive groin surgery

By Anthony Barton
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For the Penn State Icers, Friday night's game against West Chester marked the return of one of the team's leading scorers from last year, junior Nick Seravalli.

Coming back from full-groin reconstructive surgery in the off-season, the forward logged his first minutes since the Icers were eliminated in the ACHA National Playoffs last spring.

"I thought I played alright but by no stretch am I where I want to be," Seravalli said.

"It was coach's decision to put me in the lineup so obviously I'm going to play."

Seravalli played most of last season with a nagging groin injury after getting injured in practice last November.

An offseason MRI led to a surgery performed by noted surgeon Dr. William Meyers to fix five groin tears, a hernia and add extensions to his abductors.

Seravalli did not play in

Saturday's game. Coach Scott Balboni said he will play one game a series until he is back in shape.

"It's a tough surgery to have as a hockey player because it's the muscles you use the most," Balboni said. "I think he looked good and I don't think he looked out of place."

While icing both groins after the game, Seravalli said he was in some pain following the matchup with the Golden Rams.

"It's alright. It doesn't feel great, it doesn't feel bad," Seravalli said after the game. "I'm just trying to

roll with the punches right now."

Junior assistant captain Paul Daley said Seravalli is a great player who will definitely help the team.

"One of his best assets is his shot, he has a great release," Daley said. "It's a pretty hard shot."

Daley said that shot will also aid an already strong powerplay. The Icers are currently operating at a 37.1 percent clip.

Senior assistant captain Tim O'Brien said the Icers have been lacking at the center position

throughout the year, and have been playing guys out of position to make up for it. O'Brien said Seravalli will play center, giving the team strength up the middle.

Seravalli will have extra rehab sessions to strengthen the groins as well as practice with the team.

"I'm never going to be 100 percent, but I hope to get a little bit better as the season moves along," Seravalli said. "I'm just going day by day at this point to see how I feel."

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